

Dear Longview,

Last week our City Council voted to change the way we have been handling your tax dollars set aside for attracting tourism to Longview. The past several years, these dollars (a percentage of the revenues generated from the hotel/motel tax) have been distributed to the Convention and Visitor's Bureau of the Chamber of Commerce. Your Council desires to assign these funds to a new department at the City of Longview exclusively dedicated to tourism. We feel that in so doing, we will have better control of your funds and can entirely commit their use to tourism.

I would like to see these funds dedicated to continuing to attract tourists to Longview through our many wonderful initiatives; as well as a portion of these funds dedicated to sports tourism via the expansion of Lear Park Sports Complex. Currently, Lear Park is the City of Longview's number 1 revenue producer - bringing in an average of \$12.7 million per year for the last 10 years. Lear Park is utilized less than half of the year and because of a lack of ball fields, we are sending overflow teams to other cities to accommodate the number of teams in our tournaments. If we can increase the number of ball fields available – and upgrade existing ball fields in parks all over Longview – we can ensure that Longview is the top choice in our region for sports tourism. If we are bringing in \$12.7 million with a shortage of ball fields and utilizing the park less than half a year, think of what we could do if we expanded it! I believe we can easily increase our city's revenue which can be used to fund some of the projects that you have told us you want in the surveys conducted through the Comprehensive Plan project - all while sprucing up all of Longview's parks for our children. This would be a win-win for Longview!

Brighten your corner

Thank you for sharing your stories of "corner brightening". By taking time and responsibility to make your corner of the world better, it has made a difference all over Longview. Your stories of shining your light inspire me; please keep them coming. It was great seeing the celebration in Longview and our country last night as we commemorated our nation's independence. I hope you had the opportunity to spend time with your family, as I did. The Fourth of July holiday always reminds me how much I appreciate my close family and the freedoms that so many have fought to secure. So Longview, I challenge you this next week to appreciate your family and spend some quality time with them. And while you're at it, take some time to thank those who have provided and maintain the freedoms we enjoy.

Upcoming Focus

In the coming weeks, your Council will also be taking a look at how to fund the projects you, as citizens, have requested through the Comprehensive Plan. You have told us you want to expand the trail system within our parks; more attention to the downtown district; plus bike lanes and sidewalks on our streets. In order to tackle these projects we will need a good bit of money. My desire is to make these things happen without raising taxes – which will require us to look at the city budget and all entities receiving funds from the city with a fresh outlook.

I would also like for our Council to take a good look at what we are doing to attract and retain businesses here in Longview. By addressing the projects you desire in the Comprehensive Plan, our quality of life will inevitably improve and, I believe, will result in a hearty environment in which existing businesses will thrive and new businesses will want to operate here. Please help me in thinking of

creative ways we can attract businesses to Longview and what we can do to better create an environment for them to be successful.

Another item pertaining to funding that we will need to address is how to fund our new Animal Shelter. The estimated annual budget is approximately \$1.65 million per year to operate the shelter. We will need to prepare and execute contracts with our neighboring cities who will be using the shelter as well. We will need to coordinate the use of volunteers – adults and children alike – to care for our animals. This will be no small task and it will take all of us to implement this plan successfully.

It's not too late to replant your squash, zucchini, cucumbers and tomatoes. The rain has been tough on them, but good, warm days are ahead.

Study hard, have some fun and say your prayers,

Andy